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Action

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SAIGON 22274, 4-8-67

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EXDIS

SUBJECT: THIEU OR KY

REF SAIGON 22050

1. IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR APRIL 5 FOREIGN MINISTER TRAN VAN DO VOLUNTEERED SOME FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS AMONG THE MILITARY LEADERS. DO SAID HE HAD TALKED WITH GENERAL THIEU THE DAY BEFORE.

2. THIEU REPORTEDLY HAD CONCLUDED THAT THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL SHOULD NOT BE FORCED TO MAKE THE DECISION BETWEEN

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THIEU AND KY. HE ADDED THAT MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL DID NOT WANT TO BE FACED WITH SUCH A DECISION SINCE IT WOULD ONLY PUT THEM INTO OPPOSING CAMPS AND CREATE SERIOUS DIVISIONS AMONG THEM.

3. THIEU ALSO TOLD DO THERE WAS A DANGER THAT IF A "MILITARY" TICKET WERE SELECTED AND THEN DEFEATED BY A CIVILIAN TICKET THIS WOULD BE A SERIOUS LOSS OF PRESTIGE FOR THE MILITARY AS A WHOLE. HE HAD INCREASINGLY COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THEY SHOULD NOT TAKE SUCH A RISK AND THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS A BROAD NATIONAL FRONT OF CIVILIANS AND MILITARY. THIEU ENVISAGED DEVELOPMENNOF A MOVEMENT AMONG BROADLY REPRESENTATIVE ELEMENTS, PERHAPS IN THE FORM OF A "CONGRESS", WHICH COULD SELECT A CIVILIAN-MILITARY TICKET.

4. DO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE CURRENT DECISION MAKING PROCESS WAS A PAINFUL ONE, BUT SAID THAT IT WAS VITAL FOR VIETNAM AT WAR TO FIND A SOLUTION WHICH WILL PULL THE PEOPLE TOGETHER AND

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NOT OFFER ONLY THE COMMUNISTS AS AN ALTERNATIVE, AS HAD DIEM. HE ADED THAT THERE MUST BE AN OPPORTUNITY IN THE BUILDING OF GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS FOR A TRUE NATIONALIST OPPOSITION, TO WHICH THOSE VIETNAMESE WHO WERE NOT SUPPORTERS OF THE RULING GROUP COULD TURN. OBVIOUSLY, POLITICAL PARTIES WOULD BE THE NATURAL FORM FOR SUCH GROUPS BUT THEY WOULD NOT BE IN EXISTENCE FOR THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS AND COULD ONLY DEVELOP THEREAFTER.

5 COMMENT: FROM DO'S OBYERVATIONS AND OTHER REPORTS WE CONCLUDE THAT THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS BETWEEN THIEU AND KY IS STILL FOLLOWING A TORTUOUS COURSE. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, DO IS MUCH CLOSER TO THIEU THAN TO KY. HE POINTEDLY SAID THAT HE HAD NOT TALKED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER SINCE THE GUAM MEETING. IT APPEARS FROM HIS ACCOUNT OF THE CONVERSATION WITH THIEU THAT THE LATTER IS SEEKING TO GENERTE A PROCESS WHICH MIGHT PUT THE DECISION AS BETWEEN HIM AND KY IN THE HANDS OF A CIVILIAN NATIONAL FRONT. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THIS PROCEDURE WILL BE ADOPTED AND IF SO, WHETHER THIEU OR KY WILL BE THE MORE EFFECTIVE IN CREATING

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SUCH "POPULAR" SUPPORT.

GP-3. LODGE
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